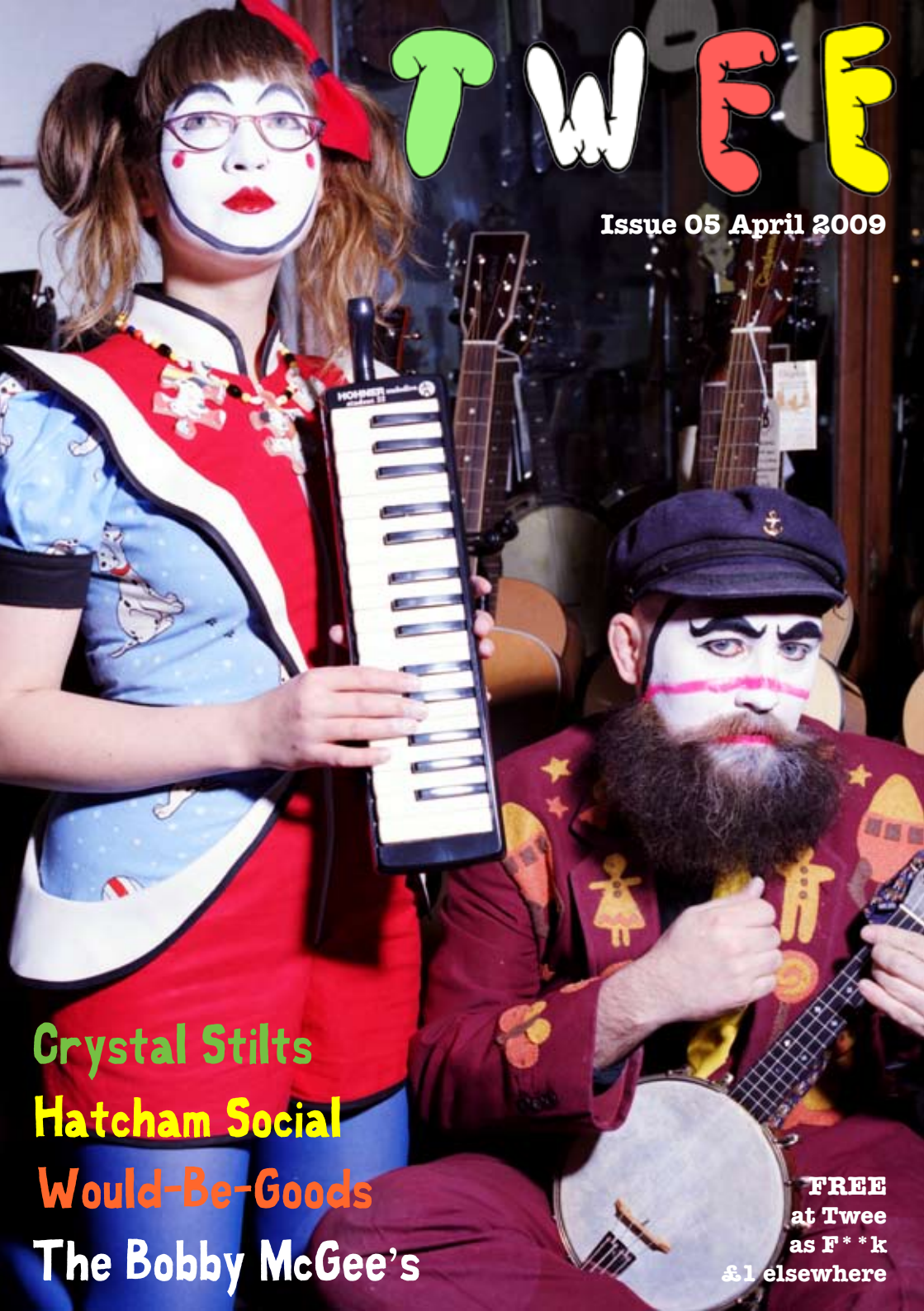

TWEE

Issue 05 April 2009

Crystal Stilts

Hatcham Social

Would-Be-Goods

The Bobby McGee's

FREE
at Twee
as F**k
&1 elsewhere

Hello,

And welcome to this, the fifth and bestest issue of *Twee*. Nestling snugly amidst the very pages that now appear before you are such delights as a downright filthy natter with "Dostoyevsky Skiffle" supremos The Bobby McGee's, a nice sit down with the impossibly elegant Would-Be-Goods, an erudite conversation with the cooler-than-thou Crystal Stilts and a potted history of one of our favourite labels ever; the mighty Slumberland. Add to this the lowdown on Glasgow grrl-punkas Peter Parker, and our first ever interview in comic form courtesy of Hatcham Social's Finn Kidd; and you get a slice of fanzine-y goodness that's been more fun to put together than drinking tea with kittens in funny hats. And as ever, we hope you enjoy reading it just as much.

Lots of love TAF xxx
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Visit www.tweeasfuck.com for an extended colour version of the fanzine.

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PETER PARKER.

I met Jane and Tori from Peter Parker in the bar of the CCA in Glasgow. Having bought the first round of drinks, we're joined by Erik from Wake the President who is immediately subject to the kind of teasing that follows from being the only man in the company of talkative women.

Words: Elaine Tierney
Pictures: Mac

Jane: How am I going to take this seriously?

TAF: Indeed. So if you could introduce yrselves and tell me a bit about how you got together as a band?

J: [To Tori] Don't tell her about that.

TAF: That's, like, half my questions gone...

Tori: I met Jane one night when I was wearing this big red cape and she came up and attacked me verbally, "Oi! You big red tomato!"

TAF: Was it fancy dress?

T: No, no. I was just wearing a red hat and cape...

J: ...and my friend Lindsay said, "Look at that big red tomato!" And I was, like, "where is she?"

T: I haven't worn that cape since.

TAF: And the rest of the band, how did you meet them?

J: Me and Ros met in the kitchen at my friend Leanne's party and we decided to form a band and started playing together. We needed a guitarist and we had one but he ended up falling over the banisters at a party in the west end [of Glasgow]...

Erik: I was at that party- it was horrible!

J: Yeah, he impaled himself on a spike, so we asked Jeremy, who my brother [John McKeown] knew and we had this boy drummer who was absolutely rubbish and said all the wrong things [see Lungleg interview in TAF Fanzine 01]. And then my brother was continuously telling me to get Tori even though I already had a drummer and I was like, "No thank you. Don't tell me what to do", but it turned out he was actually right.

[There is a brief hiatus during which all parties engage in scurrilous local music gossip. Much like All The President's Men*, this is totally off the record and much more interesting than anything we can actually print...]*

TAF: What about the name- was it one of those things where the name was already there? Are you secret comic fanatics?

J: Absolutely! I make no secret about it. I came up with the name in a little bar on Ashton Lane: me and my ex-boyfriend were trying to think up names for the band and he actually came up with 'Peter Parker'- and I was like, "That's brilliant" and he was, like "That's shit", which only reinforced my opinion that it was an excellent name...

TAF: And who does yr artwork?

J: Mac - he was at the London show. Did you meet him?

TAF: Very briefly- was he the very drunk man..?

J: Yeah, he's got a kid and a wife so when he goes out...

TAF:...he really goes for it!

J: He's doing the artwork for the first single at the moment.

TAF: What's the first single going to be?

J: [heavy sarcasm as Erik WtP also runs Say Dirty...] I think we're going to release it through two labels from Glasgow, one called Say Dirty and another called Lucky Number 9. Well, that's what we think is happening...

E: Yup.

TAF: So what track is it going to be? The last time I saw you play, there were people saying that every song could be a single...

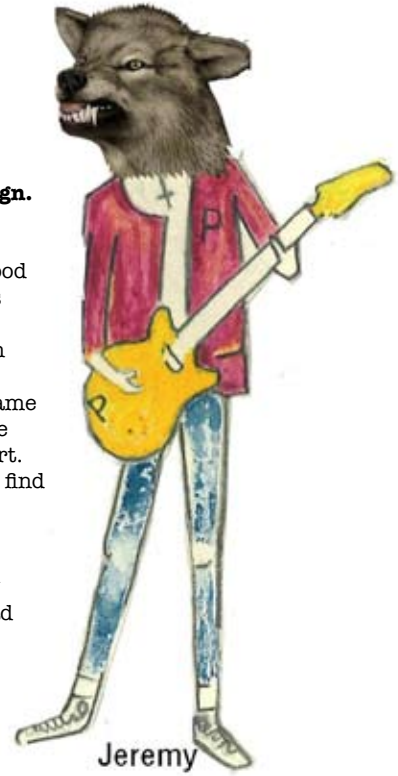
J: 'Swallow the Rockets'. It's the one that gets listened to most on MySpace- although that's no indication of anything but it's definitely the best of the early songs that we wrote...

TAF: When you got the band together how did you start writing?

J: Ros came to my house and we sat there with a practice amp and just wrote until we had three or four songs. Then we got Jeremy up and the terrible drummer, who only showed up for one out of three practices...

TAF: Bad sign.

J: It was actually a good thing as he's only really drummed on one song, so when Tori came in, it was like a proper start. How did you find it, Tori?



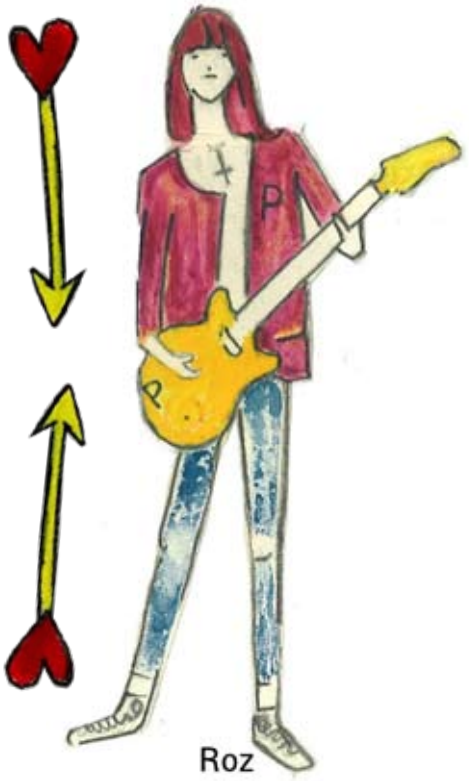
T: I really enjoyed how everyone had their own styles...

TAF: How did you find it by comparison with other bands you'dbeen in before? You'd been in Johnny and the Debutantes, right?

T: [choosing words carefully] There's a lot more democracy in Peter Parker I would say...

E: I remember rehearsing in a studio next to Johnny and it sounded like it was just him going, 'Right, ok, let's do this!'

T: [laughs] Yeah, there wasn't so much room for making a contribution. Like, I don't think anyone likes being in a band where there's one main person. That's what I like about Peter Parker: no one's in the band just to be in the band, we're all interested in making this music.



TAF: Do you have similar taste in music as a band? Or is there stuff that one of you likes that the rest of the band think is shit?

T: I like a lot of sixties stuff...

J: Like Cilla Black!

T: No, a lot of simple harmony bands.

[The interview is stopped again when Stevie from Lucky Number 9 turns up. More off the record discussions ensue. I try to bring the interview back on course but it's a losing battle...]

TAF: Anyway. Is there any kind of musical consensus?

J: I'm not sure that the writing part of this band has that much to do with our musical influences. It's not like we've sat down and said, 'We want to sound a wee bit like this or a wee bit like that...' I have no idea what Jeremy likes- we don't really let him talk.

T: It's like, "Shut up!"

J: He'll probably try and tell us at some point. He could be into anything for all we know! Jeremy's an amazing guitarist though- he's in, like, four or five bands at the moment...

TAF: ...whoring himself around. And to ask the question I always like to ask, if there was one song you could erase from the history of music, what would you choose?

T: It's a hard question. There's a lot of stuff. Whole eras.

J: I'm going to be controversial and say 'Duchess' by Scott Walker. This relates directly to Mac, the guy who does our artwork, because I lived with him in London and he used to play that song 24 hours a day- over and over and over again.

T: Can I come back to you on that one. I'd like to give it serious thought.

J: Oh no! She'll be off thinking about it for hours...

T: It's quite a serious matter...

J: ...but it's not like it's actually going to happen...

T: ...it might.

TAF: What have you enjoyed most about playing live- you've been gigging for about a year, right?

J: Yeah. For the first couple of shows, I was just getting used to playing live again. Personally I hadn't played a gig for three years, which was probably longer than the rest of you.

TAF: What was the last band you'd played with?

J: The Mars Hotel- my brother's band before 1990s. We were probably together for three years at the most. And with that band, my brother did the music, so I was trying to remember how to play bass parts he'd thought up. It's different when you write the music yourself.

TAF: You look like you were having great fun at the Guided Missile Christmas party...

J: The London gig was great fun- I think we were all quite drunk by then.

TAF: [to Tori]: Didn't Jeremy leave yr drum breakables outside Buffalo Bar?

T: Yeah, that's right. We went back to get them the next morning and they'd gone but I've broken so many cymbals in the past...

TAF: Yr quite the powerful drummer...

T: Well, my first band when I was about thirteen, we played a lot of embarrassing covers - Jimi Hendrix, Deep Purple, Guns n' Roses...that sort of thing. It was always rock for me then. I even got kicked in the face at a Metallica gig...

J: What was the name of yr band in Ayr?

T: [laughing] Call Us What U Like! It was just me, my boyfriend and his little brother and we'd play rock covers around Ayr town centre.

TAF: So what's the most rock'n'roll thing you've done in Peter Parker?

J: I can tell you one thing that was the total opposite. We played in Aberdeen last week and they were filming this show, *Cops with Cameras*, outside the venue and they were testing for drugs, so me and Tori volunteered to get tested...and we were both clean. How embarrassing.

TAF: Is it going to be on TV?

J: I hope so!

TAF: There was that time you said you were going to tie Jeremy up...

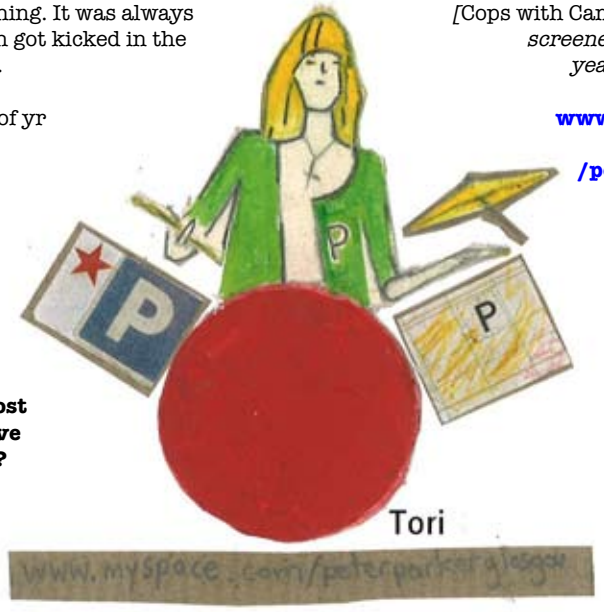
J: Yeah, we were going to wait until he passed out and tie him up because he's the only boy- you know, tie his shoes to his arms so that he'd be really disorientated when he woke up. But I told Jeremy that's what I was going to do and then totally forgot about it and passed out and he tied my arms together with clingfilm...

T: ...and there was one point in the middle of the night when you half woke up and really gracefully removed all the clingfilm and fell straight back to sleep again!

J: And I didn't even remember until Jeremy brought it up in the car on the way home.

[Cops with Camera will be screened later this year on ITV1]

www.myspace.com/peterparkerglasgow



Crystal Stilts

Words: Chris Cottingham
Photo: Pavla Kopecna

New York four-piece CRYSTAL STILTS spent two years recording their debut album,* Alight Of Night*. Turns out it was a good move. Not only did they finally get the sound they wanted - somewhere between The Velvet Underground and the C86 bands - but when it was released earlier this year it placed them at the forefront of a wave of bands from the city's borough of Brooklyn.

TAF: The album took two years to record. Why?

Brad: We liked the idea of putting it out ourselves, but we couldn't really handle it financially or time-wise. It sort of languished for a couple of years because we ran out of money. Then when Slumberland Records asked us about a single and we told them that we had a whole album, and they decided to put it out. Also, we've mixed it three times. The first time it was with someone who wasn't really sympathetic to what we were going for, so it was kind of a push-pull sort of thing.
JB: We spent a lot of money on mixing and it was like, this should take two days, not two years. We mixed it on to mono tape one time. That was cool, but it still didn't work. It's partly my fault. Mixing the album was a little bit of learning experience.

TAF: Are you obsessive about detail?

JB: I can get a little bit meticulous, yes.
BH: I don't have an ear for music in an intricate way. I'm not a musician and I don't play anything. To me, I get an overall sound. But he has an ear so he can pick apart that the bass needs EQ-ing and stuff like that.

TAF: Where does you ear for detail come from?

BH: He's got music in his family.
JB: My grandfather was a producer.
BH: He produced [Miles Davis's 1959 jazz landmark] *Kind Of Blue*.
JB: He produced a lot of Columbia's stuff in the late 50s and early 60s. His name was Irving Townsend. He did a lot of classical records. He died when I was one-year old so I never knew him, but I identify with him. He's definitely been an inspiration to me.

TAF: How does the song writing process work?

BH: JB would bring in the guitar parts and I'd pull out some lyrics and that's how it started. This

album was mainly composed by us two. Now it's different. All members of the band contribute.

TAF: How did the band start?

BH: We knew each other in South Florida, where we were both raised. We were part of a group of a few friends who listened to the kind of music that was outside the norm. People only listened to Madonna and stuff like that. Even the Velvet Underground and The Stooges were considered weird. We used to listen to a lot of the Television Personalities and Flying Nun stuff like The Clean. Also '60s stuff like The Troggs or The Outsiders.
JB: We moved to New York in September 2002 at around the same time, without any intention of starting a band. The main reason was that we both wanted to get out of Florida.

TAF: Then what happened?

JB: We started jamming in 2003 just for fun. Six months later, in March 2004, we record Shattered Shine, which we released at the end of that year. It ended up getting radio play on [NYU radio station] WNYU. It was in their end of year list. It was a bit of a shock. It's not like we were doing it for a lark, but we weren't taking it that seriously either.
JB: We had no expectations whatsoever.
BH: So the fact that people were interested was encouraging for us to keep going.

TAF: Were you just messing around to start with?

BH: Not with the songwriting. We were trying to write the best songs we could. But we weren't really playing shows or doing anything apart from writing songs.
JB: Which is why we weren't really building any momentum. We recorded the self-titled EP about a year later. But we ran out of money again so it didn't come out until 2008. By that time, we'd already recorded the album. The EP got a little attention and people asked about putting something else out and we had a whole album already. We didn't go about anything in a normal way. We probably over recorded for a band who hadn't got much attention playing live or anything.

TAF: What was the high point recording the album?

JB: It was really fun recording the bassline for the song Crystal Stilts because we had a huge stack of bass amps and it was the loudest bass noise I'd ever heard.

TAF: How about the low point?

JB: Mixing on an empty stomach for eight hours. I was hallucinating.

TAF: You don't like being grouped in with 'the Brooklyn scene'. Why not?

JB: It's not as much of a scene as people might think.
BH: We have friends that play shows together. We shared a practice space with The Pains Of Being Pure At Heart. We used to play a lot of shows with Vivian Girls. We're friends with those bands. But you never think of it as a scene. You think of it as your friends. Other people romanticise it as this big scene in Brooklyn.

TAF: Do you have any shared values with the other Brooklyn bands?

JB: The ones that are our friends definitely. The thing about New York is that there's hundreds of bands and they all have their little circles. I don't know a lot of the bands that get mentioned as being part of the Brooklyn scene.

TAF: Has the fact that people talk about a scene helped you or not?

BH: Yeah. It must help. The press talk about the scene and they often mention all these other bands. But also a lot of bands across the US try to; Portland, Oregon and Psychedelic Horse Shit from Columbus Ohio.

TAF: Does it get on your nerves when people group you together with other bands into a scene?

BH: That's what journalists do.
JB: There are some bands that get attention that we don't know or identify with at all.

TAF: What Brooklyn bands do you like?

JB: There's a band called German Measles that I like. Mike from Blank Dogs has a label called Captured Tracks that has all kinds of stuff coming out in the next couple of months and I think it's all pretty exciting.

TAF: It's been a struggle. Has it been worth it?

JB: It's a little bit surreal now because we were doing it for five years with absolutely no reward.
BH: There still haven't been any financial rewards but the fact that people are into it is amazing. How many people get to make a record that other people are into? I wouldn't swap that for anything.

www.myspace.com/crystalstilts

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THE BOBBY McGEE'S

Words: Rory Mackie

Photo: Pavla Kopecna

Cover stars The Bobby McGee's are that rare thing; a band that are utterly, genuinely unique. Whilst so many seem content to re-hash, re-frame or re-contextualise an ever-decreasing pool of reference points, the Bobbies continue to plough their own furrow. To witness their live show is to experience a riotous muddle of poetry, clown make-up, ukuleles, double bass, dance routines and shouting. But much, much better than that sounds. We catch up with Jimmy and Eleanor over a Brick Lane curry to discuss their new LP* La Appropriation Bourgeoise De La Bobby McGee's, *scoring a Film4 advert at a cider festival, and beating Gordon Brown to a literature award...

TAF: So Jimmy, you have a beard, you've been a teacher and a carpenter, and some of your songs are spreading the word of love. Do you ever think you might be Jesus?

J: I'll let Eleanor answer that.
E: ...
J: I think there are a lot of similarities. I have disciples and I like to touch young men...

TAF: To cure them? Or just for the touching?

J: Just for the touching. And I offer salvation to the world through my work. So, yeah.

TAF: One of my favourite things about a Bobby McGee's gig...

J: Is the end of it!

TAF: Yeah, the end particularly, but also the way you polarise opinion. When people come to see you for the first time you always provoke a strong reaction whether positive or negative. I remember when you played at Twee As Fuck someone shouted out; "Donald, where's your trousers?" to which you replied; "I left them at your Mum's house." So what are the best or worst heckles or reactions you've had?

J: Somebody said; "You look like a cunt!" and I said; "It takes a stupid suit and lots of make-up to make me look a cunt – but you're doing pretty well with just that hat and tight jeans". But I think what we get most is what I call Vu Deja. You see any other current band and you think, "I've seen this before", y'know – Déjà vu. But we often provoke Vu Deja – when an audience will just stand and stare at us for five minutes thinking, "what the hell *is* this? What are youse *doing*? We've never seen anything like this before." But, you know, sometimes they get it and sometimes they don't. If we can't amaze them with science we baffle them with bullshit.
E: There was a good one in Leeds as well, there's footage on YouTube. (**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siT9rJFYhwk**)
J: A heckler in Leeds, and at the beginning of the video you see his little head and he shouts something and Graeme just comes up and hits him with his double-bass.

TAF: Wow! And what did he say?

E: He didn't say anything after that!
J: He was being annoying all through the gig, so Graeme just went, "fuck this" and snapped – and then we sang a song called, 'A Little Bit Of Love'.

TAF: Eleanor – how did you meet Jimmy?

E: Jimmy had the idea for the band in his head long before he met me. When we finally did meet he asked me if I sang; I said I didn't. He asked me if I could play guitar; I said I couldn't. He asked if I wrote songs and I said I only wrote crap ones.
J: So I booked three gigs.
E: And I'd never performed before at all.
J: Elanor's boyfriend was supporting The Libertines at a gig in Leicester. I'd just come back from my best friend's wedding - a girl that I'd known for years had just got married to an American...
E: My *ex-boyfriend* was supporting The Libertines
J: He was your ex-boyfriend then was he?
E: Yep.
J: That's a crap story then, we'll change it.
E: OK he *was* my boyfriend at the time.

TAF: Your fiancé.

E: And he was actually *in* The Libertines.
J: That's better. Anyway I went home that night and booked us three gigs.
E: The first one of which was in four weeks time.
J: I'd been looking for a while for someone to be in another band with and we met and talked all night and it was just...
E: And I'd been writing maudlin, depressing teenage songs for too long...
J: The big influence when we first started was the first Arab Strap record, it just made me realise that any drunken Scotsman that thinks he's a poet can just get a tape recorder and... the rest is history. Our first gig got a cracking review, the guy said the first thirty seconds was the worst thing ever and the rest was genius.

TAF: Like making love.

E: Hmmmm. I think that depends on who you're making love *to*.
J: With me, the first thirty seconds is genius and the rest is sleeping!

TAF: Moving swiftly on; Jimmy I remember you telling me that you used to run folk nights...

E: It was an open-mic night in Brighton - called TURDS.

TAF: Turds?

E: TURDS - The Ukulele Research and Development Society.

TAF: Ah, and I believe you had some sort of list of commandments for people who wanted to play there?

J: Due to my Jesus fixation I thought I could help bands and artists who were just starting out, and this took on the form of ten commandments. Things they shouldn't do onstage mainly.
E: My favourite was; "Didgeree-don't"
J: Ah yes, commandment number seven: "Didgeree-don't". You can't stress that too much in Brighton.
E: Someone once "didgeree-did" though. It was awful...
J: It was didgeree-fucking-atrocious. There was also "Don't use the word 'baby' in a song unless you're Diana Ross", "Don't sing about drugs unless you're Pete Doherty," "Don't have the word 'soul' in a song title unless you're James Brown."
E: So I wrote a song that broke every single rule, just to annoy Jimmy. It had the word 'baby' at the end of every line.
J: Aye, it was called; "Baby Baby Baby, Where Did My Soul Go?" The most important commandment though was; "You're not allowed to say 'Thank you' at the end of a song until someone has actually clapped."

TAF: I would add; "You're not allowed to say the word 'MySpace' onstage more than once."

E: I think this was before MySpace.
J: Aye, we started in the sixties.

TAF: No Jimmy, you started in *your* sixties.

J: Right! This interview is over. We're going home.

TAF: And you invented the word 'twee-core' about then didn't you? To describe what you were doing?

E: Jimmy said; "We're going to be twee." And I said; "What does 'twee' mean – isn't that a bad thing?"
J: Peter Robinson from the NME used the word "twee-core" to describe us in an interview about five years ago, and I used to talk to Gareth from Los Campesinos! on the internet quite a bit, before they started up, then years later he told me their song 'International Tweexcore Underground' was about us. Well he said that onstage in Brighton, but I don't know...

E: But he is lovely though. And you did sleep with him didn't you?
J: I don't want to talk about it.

TAF: Talk about the album then.

J: We've recorded nineteen songs for it at the moment, all very well recorded. I think we're going through phases with it, you know you hear the songs so often that there'll be days where we'll be going, "This is crap, what are we doing here?"
E: Also we'd been waiting to record it for about a year, wanting it to be really good.
J: We built our own studio for it, or Graeme the bass player built it. And I don't mean installed it, we built the roof, the walls, the floor; like The Waltons. It's a nice little studio and Graeme's a very good sound engineer, very traditional, he plays in Blues and Jazz bands. He keeps us all acoustic, I would have loads of affects and synths and things but Graeme likes it very traditional and he's very good. It's good because we can play things live *exactly* the way they sound in our recordings, but like I say, some days I hear it and go, "hmmm" and other days I think. "Christ, this is really good." The scariest thing is that we're both quite good musicians now, and I don't think anyone was ever interested in us because the music was good.

TAF: And the name The Bobby McGee's comes from Bobby...

J: McFerrin!

TAF: No! Bobby Gillespie and Alan McGee right? And didn't you have a bit of an email war with Alan Mcgee?

J: I wrote to him a few times and got no response. Then I'd asked him to come and have a wee listen to us. I grew up in Scotland not so far away from where he and Bobby Gillespie grew up, and I'd sent him a few messages saying "please come and see a band named after you", and got no reply, so in the end I just went, "for fuck's sake baldy, put down your cocaine long enough to come and see a band named after you and your junkie mate" and got a really venomous reply back saying "How dare you! I've not touched cocaine for years and my friend Bobby is trying hard to give up drugs. How very dare you, sir!"

TAF: You have a bit of a habit of getting in touch with people on spec via the internet don't you? I remember something about Fat Boy Slim...

J: The first thing we made, in 2002, was a thing called 'The Wee Twee CD', a collector's item now – they sell for thousands on eBay – and we sent Fat Boy Slim one. Elanor had just moved to Brighton and I sent him [Fatboy] a letter saying, "can you remix us? Then my girlfriend will marry me." And I sent it to, 'Fatboy Slim, A Big House On The Beach, Brighton.' He wrote back and said, "get her pregnant, then she'll have to marry you", so I stuffed a pillow up her dress, took a photo and sent it back to him. And he then came to see us one night, I've not written back since but he did say he loved the song about 'Harold and Maude' that's going to be on our new album. He was lovely actually, when he came to see us, he came over and spoke to us and knew the words to songs and stuff, it was great. It was really nice, because I've had a soft spot for him ever since The Housemartins. Then just by chance our bass-player Graeme got asked to repair his (Fatboy's) bass, so he was round his house doing that whilst Norman was watching the cricket, and said "oh, I see you've got a Bobby McGee's CD over there." To which he replied, "tell Jimmy I'll remix him when, no. 1, he learns to tune his instrument and, no. 2, he learns to play in time."
E: Never going to happen! We did have a drum'n'bass remix of 'No Friends' once though.

TAF: Really? Is that available?

E: Yeah, it's quite good actually. It's by DJ Gallow Slut.
J: And an American label called Popgun released a CD called, 'How To Bling On A Shoestring.' – lo-fi covers of old-school Hip-Hop – and me and Eleanor did a ukulele version of 'Mary Mary' by Run DMC.
E: I had to try to rap...I could never listen

Photographed by Pavla Kopecna at The Duke of Uke. CLothes by Dig for VIctory, necklace by Frantiska Parker.

back to it.
J: It's got scratching noises on it, made via a method I learned from a group of ten year-old rappers from Coventry, a secret scratching technique involving a microphone and a plastic jacket. I had to look up in a dictionary what 'old-school' and 'lo-fi' actually meant...

TAF: So I hear that Eleanor was taking her A-levels when you met her first Jimmy? And you worked in the school next door to hers? Were you peering down from your classroom into the adjoining playground and thinking, "I'm going to make that girl a star"?

J: Yeah. More or less.

TAF: Aren't there laws against that sort of thing?

J: Yes.
E: And that's why he's not a teacher anymore!
J: Yeah she did go to the school next door, but I'd moved on to another school by then... for legal reasons.
E: I went to a different sixth form though.

TAF: Now I'm confused, how did you actually meet for the first time then?

J: Through a paedophile ring.
E: No, it really was at that Libertines gig.
J: I used to cycle past her house every day and throw stones at her window.
E: My mum was pretty outraged.
J: "Just knock on the fucking door!"
E: Was that because I'd still be in bed?
J: Yeah, with some guy.
E: With some guy and his brother!

TAF: Are you Bobby McGee's twenty-four hours a day or do you go home and take off the make-up and the beard?

J: We played an indiepop festival in Sweden, which is like Twee As Fuck in the countryside, with huge potential for disaster; shambling and mad. And we went down really, really well at this festival. We were walking around all day afterwards, we hadn't reached the giddy heights we have now, but we had kids coming up to us all day going; "Oh! Bobby McGee's, Bobby McGee's!" It was amazing. As the day wore on and people got more and more drunk it got a bit wearing though and I said, "Oh God Eleanor, if this is how Madonna feels, I'm not sure I want to do this." Elanor said, "Look Jimmy, if the attention is bothering you, you could always just go and wash your make-up off." I didn't though.

TAF: Where does your album title come from?

J: From an interview. A French/German TV channel came over and one of the first questions they asked us...they didn't ask us about The Libertines, or what we thought about The Horrors, they said [adopts ludicrous French accent] "So Jimmy, what do you think about the bourgeois appropriation of Folk Music?" Then they asked me how my relationship with my father affected my work and how a working class upbringing shaped what I wrote about.

TAF: So how did your relationship with your father affect your work?

J: It's complicated.
E: Your dad wants to do covers of our songs – he's started learning the guitar.
J: At the age of sixty-five! He's always been a big music fan.
E: Every time your mum sees you, she still says, "still can't sing then?"
J: Aye; "Heard you on Radio One – still can't sing! Saw you in the NME – still can't sing! Saw you on Channel Four – still can't sing!"
E: I think it's important that everyone knows that what Jimmy really wants to do is be able to sing beautiful love ballads.

TAF: But he does sing beautiful love ballads.

J: Just *badly*. On the album there's a terrible version of "Green Grow The Rushes Oh' which is a Robert Burns song, my singing voice ruins it.
E: It's not that bad – it's more the accent that's the problem.

TAF: Your image and your stage presence really set you apart from most bands. Is it something you've worked hard on?

Did you study Noh theatre? Any Lindsay Kemp in there? Or do you just like dragging up and shouting?

J: Bit of both really.
E: I did a photo shoot for my clothes with the make-up and at the same time Jimmy was in a play.
J: A Commedia dell'arte play. That's Italian you know.
E: It just so happened that we were wearing the same make-up at the same time.
J: It was around that time that Graeme joined the band as well and we thought, "Ha – let's see if we can get him to wear this ridiculous stuff", just for a laugh really, because he was in really straight Jazz and Blues bands at the time. But it's fun you know, it always gets an audience reaction. All bands dress up onstage – it's just that 90% of them are really bad at it.

TAF: Eleanor tell us more about *Dig For Victory.*

E: That's my clothing label. I started making dresses just for myself when I play with The Bobby McGee's and then it got a bit out of hand.

TAF: How so?

E: Well people would come up to me after shows and ask where I'd got something and I'd say I'd made it myself and sometimes they'd ask me to make them something too, so I started making clothes for other people basically.

TAF: You've made stuff for Bat For Lashes right? Any other high profile clients?

J: Theoretical Girl.
E: Yes – well she borrowed a Harlequin dress for a couple of shows. And Heather Mills, but that wasn't a commission – she just bought a couple of dresses from a shop in Brighton. One of them was a romper suit. I was quite excited.

TAF: And what's next for the Bobby McGee's?

J: Since the Film4 advert we've had quite a lot of interest from managers and PR people and things, but I'm rubbish about promotion, I had to be talked into doing a launch party for the album even.

TAF: How did the Film4 thing happen?

E: Oh that was at this crazy gig at a Cider Festival that we got banned from for swearing.

TAF: Of course.

J: They paid us in cider – all day we could drink as much cider as we liked.
E: And this guy saw us play who does music for adverts. Jimmy was giving out sweets and this little kid came to the front to ask for more sweets and Jimmy gave him more sweets and then told him to fuck off.
J: Someone wrote a letter of complaint to the promoter – which I thought was hilarious – so I told a mate of mine and he wrote 150 letters of complaint. So now we're banned from performing there again.

TAF: Didn't you do something like that before? I seem to remember you saying something about writing complaining letters about yourself to the Brighton council?

J: At the Brighton fringe festival I ran a brothel, but instead of prostitutes we had poets. I wrote letters of complaint to the local paper saying "These people are prostituting your festival." And the paper rang me up saying, "look we've had these complaints" and I said, "I know I've read the letters page, it's really upsetting me" and they said, "would you like to respond?" So I said, "can we have a photo?" We actually ended up winning two awards for it, there was a wee BBC film made and everything. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6arcXR2LqH8]. There was an award for best literature event and nominated alongside us was a series of lectures on economics given by Gordon Brown. And we won – we beat the Prime Minister into second place!

www.myspace.com/thebobbymcgees
(The B.McG. new single L.O.V.E is out in May, and the album is out in June)

HATCHAM SOCIAL

Hatcham Social are in a good place. Fresh from putting the finishing touches to debut LP 'You Dig The Tunnel, I'll Hide The Soil' and days away from embarking on their first US tour, the band are in understandably high spirits.
In our heads we're just this little indie band, but then you go to places like Madrid, or Moscow even, and there are people singing along to every word. Its just insane.
words by Rory Mackie
drawn by Finnigan Kidd

The first Hatcham Social singles were in thrall to the ground-breaking indiepop of bands like Orange Juice and Josef K, but sessions for 'You Dig The Tunnel', Produced by Jim Spencer and The Charlatans' Tim Burgess, saw a more experimental approach and lead to a opening up of their trademark sound.
we'd go out into the woods and record vocals there, or we'd build a huge box in the studio and play inside that. we'd be swinging mics around or playing through giant metal tubes, and we sampled bits from weird films culled from marathon horror movie sessions. It was great working with Jim and Tim because they were really into what we had done in the past. they were there to get us to be able to put across our vision. It wasn't so much about them putting their stamp on it.
www.hatchamsocial.co.uk

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WOULD-BE-GOODS

Words: Rory Mackie | Photos: Pavla Kopecna

The Would-Be-Goods are one of the most influential and enduring of indiepop bands. Formed around singer Jessica Griffin (who was backed by members of The Monochrome set on first LP* The Camera Loves Me*), the band have produced a back catalogue of startling high quality, culminating in the release of their most recent album* Eventyr*, hailed in some corners as their best yet. Here Jessica, guitarist Peter and bassist Andy sit down with* Twee *in a glamorous pub garden to discuss their glittering career...

TAF: When the WBGs first started, the first album was pretty much all your [Jessica's] songs...

Jessica: That's right. The first ever release by the WBGs was a single 'Fruit Paradise' backed with 'The Hanging Gardens of Ryegate', and that was just me - there wasn't a real band. A character called the King of Luxembourg on El Records wrote the single for me as, at that time, I had no ambition to write songs. It was meant to be a one-off.

TAF: And then, there was the album with The Monochrome Set...How did that come about?

J: *The Camera Loves Me* - that was the first time I worked with Andy. The Hanging Garden/Fruit Paradise thing, which everyone thought would sink without a trace amazingly got some radio airplay- John Peel played the two songs back to back and a few other people liked it, so El thought there might be some mileage in an album, so *The Camera Loves Me* happened.

TAF: Did you know the Monochrome Set beforehand?

J: I did- they were my favourite band!
Peter: Hundreds of miles away in another part of England they were my favourite band as well.

TAF: And how did you two meet?

P: I was an admirer of the WBGs and wrote a letter to Jessica. *Mondo* was my favourite record, which Jessica is sometimes dismissive of, and The Monochrome Set were favourite band...
Andy: The only problem with *Mondo* is that once you play it once, you've got to play it again - it's so short.

TAF: How did you come to record the first single in the first place?

J: I'd known Mike Alway, the El Records boss, just as a friend at the time from when he was the A&R man at Cherry Red. When he started his own label, he had this eccentric idea of getting people he knew who he thought were interesting characters or personalities to make records, regardless of whether they could sing or not. He said this, but actually did a range of secret auditions and I didn't realise mine was an audition, but it didn't matter that you weren't a professional musician. In fact, it was important that you weren't - it was a bit like an actor like Dirk Bogarde in the sixties making a record...
A: It wasn't really like Dirk Bogarde making a record...
J: Well, of course - I only meant that we had no talent.

TAF: So were you a non-musician at the time?

J: Actually I was brought up surrounded by music - all my family are quite musical, we all play instruments and sing.
P: A travelling band of players! Often down a leafy lane in County Kerry you'll hear the approach of the Griffin family.
J: I had written a few rather embarrassing songs in my teenage years, which will never see the light of day I can promise you. Written during the height of my Bowie fixation.

TAF: And is it true you met Mike when you handed him a watch?

J: No, I met Bid from the Monochrome Set when I handed him a watch, but I think I met Mike at the same occasion I met Bid. There was some obscure Monochrome Set single that I hadn't been able to get hold of and he promised to send me a copy.
P: Interestingly, and I just learnt this last night, Vic Godard is Mike Alway's postman

TAF: He's still a postman?! I thought he only did that in the 80s.

P: No, no. he delivers mail in Kew and Richmond.

TAF: Jessica, you had a Vic Godard thing where you gave up and worked in the City for a while...

J: That was my day job. Every time I wanted to make a record, I had to leave my job and start a new one to get the two weeks, or however long it took, to make a record.

TAF: And Peter you're the commissioning editor for Philosophy with OUP?

P: That's right. I've been doing the job for fifteen years and know more about philosophy than someone who isn't a philosopher should know.

TAF: You've worked with some amazing people. We've already talked about the Monochrome Set, but you were also associated with Talulah Gosh and Heavenly. Do you think when you come to make a WBGs record, does it help to have bits of other bands bleeding in...

A: Not enough! There's not enough sound effects on WBGs records, which I would have liked to bring in.
J: Both of us have very, very eclectic tastes in music, so there's quite a bit of overlap. There are a few things that you (Peter) like that I don't...
P: There a re a lot of things that I like that you don't. I worked in a record shop and I have this theory that after working in a record shop for a considerable amount of time you either end up liking nothing, or liking everything, and I ended up liking everything – and I don't mean that as a joke. Working in a record shop destroyed my taste in terms of discernment, as one thing being better than the other. In the band I think we all tend to like things from the past, I would hesitate to recommend things from the present because I don't really keep up anymore but I do try and get out to see new bands and probably my favourite current band is The Research. And I love Cats On Fire.
J: They let us sleep on their floor when we were in Turku in Finland.
P: Looking back at the first two WBGs records, they're distinct from The Monochrome Set. There's a Monochrome Set feel, but they also have their own sound, which works quite well.
J: They weren't involved in the song writing. They just performed the songs. Since Peter's joined the band, he's written two or three songs per album, but I don't think his songs sound particularly like Heavenly or Talulah Gosh songs. They're very distinct from that.

TAF: Is there a different mindset? Do you think in terms of, "this is a WBGs song and this is a Heavenly song?"

P: I do try to write distinctively for each band, or, alternatively, I might have a tune going round my head and it occurs to me that it suits a particular band, but I don't hawk the same songs round the bands...[laughs] well, actually I do - it's just occurred to me that two songs that I wrote for another of my bands (I won't say which one) were WBGs rejects!
J: We have higher standards!

TAF: Which ones did you write on the

new album?

P: In Bohemia.
J: Enemies of Promise.
A: Temporary Best Friend.
P: Temporary Best Friend was an old song I wrote about ten years ago and didn't think of doing anything with it.
A: I thought you'd given it to Paris Hilton.
P: Well, Paris tried her best with it, but it wasn't good enough.

TAF: Andy how would you compare playing with the Would-be-Goods to playing with The Monochrome Set?

A: Um. We don't rehearse enough. And we don't play enough either.
J: But the repartee is good.
A: Yeah the repartee is alright.
P: Were you a lot busier in The Monochrome Set?
A: We were busier, but even when we weren't touring we'd rehearse every week, whereas The Would-be-Goods can go six months without even meeting, then it's one rehearsal, one concert and another six months before we meet again.
P: We tend to meet socially...
A: Christmas...
J: Food is very important to The Would-be-Goods so we always have to eat well before shows and when we tour it's very important to find good places to eat.

TAF: And didn't you work with Keith West as well?

J: How did that happen? - yes indeed!

TAF: Did he try to turn you into a pop opera?

J: He didn't get it at all- he absolutely couldn't understand what he was doing in the studio with these two girls who couldn't sing, but he was very good natured about it, wasn't he?

TAF: Did he try to force a children's choir on you?

A: I remember hoping that would happen, but it didn't.
J: I think he thought we were a bit like the Singing Nuns and when he said that, I thought, "Right! He's not got it at all."

TAF: When did this happen?

J: 1987, 88.

TAF: And did those sessions turn into an album?

J: He produced *The Camera Loves Me*.
P: How many inverted commas are around the word "'produced'"...? Production is one of the strangest jobs in the world, depending on who's doing it. It always definitely involves lounging round in a chair for hours. Apart from that, it's very hard to say what it actually involves. Some of it is psychological- either positive or negative. Some of it is sometimes musical. We don't really tend to be produced, like lots of indie bands we reckon we know it all so we get an engineer, who's good at recording stuff
J: He is quite a hard taskmaster - he'd make us go back and sing things over and over again until we got it right.
P: I think that most bands now are resistant to the traditional concept of the producer, except the bands on big labels, who you'd expect to have such large egos that they wouldn't work with a producer, but I think the record company see it in financial terms: if we're going to spend a million pounds on something, we want a man who'll manage the project and make sure they don't waste this opportunity. Which makes one wonder why they give production jobs to various low-lifes!

TAF: The new album's great. It's one of my favourite WBGs albums ever. How long were you writing songs for that?

J: A long, long time - something like two years. And there are some songs on there that I was writing at the time of *Brief Lives* because I wrote so many songs then in a brief time, that even putting them on quite a long album and a couple of EPs, there were still some left over.
P: Jessica goes through long resting periods - like Gloria Swanson in Sunset Boulevard - that means she's resting for a few decades before inspiration strikes and the muse descends from Mount Helicon. Then she goes into prolific spells when the deadline looms, which is why it's a good idea for us to apply pressure- "let's do a single"- because Jessica responds to external forces...
J: It's true. I need to have someone cracking the whip.
P: I actually think it's good for people to have something external to face up to in what they're doing creatively. The trend in the music industry seems to be moving away from a gang of lads travelling the country rocking, to some saddo in his home studio. I actually think it's better, when you're working out music that there's someone else there - perhaps someone you don't know that well. It makes you more self conscious about it. Often you don't want someone else there looking doubtful about your work and making you do things differently, but I think it's good to have some external attention to make you think about whether it's really good.

TAF: You mentioned El Records a bit earlier on. It was an amazing label and you've already said that its way of doing things was very different...

J: It was very ahead of its time. It got quite a hostile response from some quarters.

TAF: What was it like to be around at the beginning of such a legendary label?

J: It was very exciting. Mike was so enthusiastic about what you were doing. You believed that he thought you were absolutely brilliant and couldn't wait to hear your next batch of songs, so you went off and wrote them because you were fired up by it - and he was fired up by large amounts of strong espresso!
P: And cake.
J: Yes, cake. He was always trying to get us to eat cakes, but we never would.

TAF: And was it true that he'd commission songs about patisserie and cakes?

J: Yes, he would try to guide you in certain directions...

TAF: He sounds very Warholian.

J: I don't think I realised how Warholian until years later. I think a lot of people thought it was pretentious, it *was* hugely pretentious but there's not necessarily anything wrong with that. But at the time it was all about being political and El was

seen as fiddling while Rome burnt.
P: I think that's right, it seems difficult to believe now but in the eighties there was a division in pop music between 'concerned' pop music and frivolous pop music. El was on the side of frivolous pop music and that did mean, inevitably, that it became an angle of attack for people who where suspicious of the label for one reason or another.

TAF: It was seen as quite mysterious as well...

J: It was, the mystery was built up deliberately. Were we real people? Did we exist at all? Was it just Mike Alway in a studio putting on different voices? To which, of course, the answer is "no it wasn't" but that's come back to haunt us a few times...
A: And wasn't it also partly mysterious because it was really unsuccessful?
J: Trust you to bring us back down to earth...
P: I'm sure all the singles lost money didn't they? They must have done...
J: Oh, I think the whole thing did!
P: And I used to work in a record shop at the that time, we used to get the latest shipment of beautiful El ten-inches that record shop workers would gaily order, put on display for a few months, and then send back a few months later after the general public had failed to realise what gems had been placed before them.
J: This *was* Abbingdon High Street, or something though wasn't it?

TAF: What have been your favourite labels that you've worked with?

J: Oh Lord! In the early days it was definitely El because it was incredibly exciting and we were doing things that other people weren't doing. It was very theatrical, like belonging to a small and very eccentric theatre company, and we all got to dress up a lot and go to exciting places. But I guess now, this last record came out on Matinee, and Jimmy's just a really nice guy.
P: He's very businesslike, which you come to appreciate. When you first start off in music you think, "Oh God, this fucker's businesslike" but then after ten years you think; "Oh, thank god – he's businesslike!" My favourite label that I've worked with is K records of Olympia, Washington, a wonderful label, although somewhat idiosyncratic business practices are operated. Well they very much believe in doing things the anti-corporate, local, home-made way, which I think is a really good idea. So take what's distinctive about you and your cultural scene and stress that, push that rather than trying to be more like other labels. Wilful... independence is a bit of a cliché, but wilful difference.

TAF: And what are your plans for the future? World tour?

J: Well we're going to play in Sweden this summer, and that's all we've really got planned. We did a really good show in Sweden last year – when I say 'good' I mean it was very enthusiastically received – so maybe that's where our future lies.
P: And we went to Turku in Finland as well, that was really good fun. It was a kind of extravagant and flamboyant tour; two dates; two countries and one very long ferry ride.

TAF: The booze cruise!

P: Yes it was the booze cruise, but when we did it it was very civilised. We've done that three times now and I really love it. We're hoping to play the world-famous Indietracks train spotting festival in Derbyshire, but they seemed to have filled up the bill without leaving room for us, so I've got to see if I can pull some music industry strings and/or grovel to see if we can go up there for the prestigious two o'clock in the afternoon set on the train, maybe.

TAF: "The Camera Loves Me", "Cecil Beaton's Scrapbook" - can you explain all the references to photography on the first LP?

J: 'Cecil Beaton's Scrapbook' was actually the title of a book of photographs he released. With that song, we got into the rehearsal studios with The Monochrome Set and it suddenly looked like the album was going to be a bit short , we needed another song, so my sister, who was involved with the first album and I went into the pub next to the studio and wrote 'Cecil Beaton's Scrapbook' in about ten minutes. It was one of those very rare songs where you're under pressure and something just comes up. So yes, it is very much about Cecil Beaton. I had read lots and lots of autobiographical stuff he had written and the song had lots of funny little anecdotes from his life.

TAF: Are you a bit of a photography buff then?

J: Yes. I do have a lot of photography books, twentieth century photography, but I can't take photographs to save my life. I'm rubbish.

TAF: And there seem to be a lot of references to fruit and animals in your interviews...

J: Fruit and animals are two of the most important things in life.
P: Actually that's the working title of the next album; "Fruit and Animals".
J: We take inspiration from everything. I've got a song on *Eventyr* called 'Baby Romaine' and Baby Romaine is actually a type of lettuce, but I also thought it sounded like the name of this rather faded debutante. And that illustrates the fact that songs can be absolutely about anything. I don't sit there and think "what am I going to write about", it's just what comes up. I never, ever write about real situations in my own life – they come out in other ways – they're there but they're very, very heavily disguised.

The new Would-Be-Goods album *Eventyr* is out now.
www.would-be-goods.com

LAURA BELL

Words: Elaine Tierney

Having met over piles of dirty secondhand clothes at Notting Hill's Retro Woman, Laura Bell was the first person we thought of to give TWEE AS FUCK its public face. Her bold, colourful illustrations provide just the right mix of naughty and nice, and even attracted the attention of Her Majesty's Constabulary, who branded an earlier incarnation of our Twee girl 'obscene'! We were delighted when Laura agreed to take some time out to answer a few questions about what makes her tick...

TAF: Introduce yrself!

Laura: I'm Laura Bell, originally from a small village in the North, with a disorganized method of collecting stuff and illustrating. Drawing was always my thing. I was the shy kid at school that always hid in the background – until the unlikely event of winning a decorating egg competition when I was six. I dared to submit a Minnie Minx egg made with 3D cardboard additions from my Coco Pops box against the tradition of sequins and butterflies. The sense of achievement has stuck with me, taking first prize when all the popular kids took runner up places with their Faberge rip-offs. Improvisation has been my thing ever since.

TAF: We obviously met in the, er, hallowed halls of Retro Woman in Notting Hill and bonded over liking a lot of the same music... Yr obviously a *big* music fan, so I was pretty surprised to learn that we were yr first music commission...

LB: It's funny you ask, I've been thinking about drawing and music a lot after something Peter Saville said at a recent talk: he said that designing album sleeves isn't really graphic design as it does not sell a product. I totally don't agree. First off, he totally put me off the New Order box set seven years ago even though I'm a big fan: eagle and a glitter ball, uh uh, don't do it for me!

An album cover alone will never 'sell' an artist to me, but it can most definitely put me off or tempt me to buy it. I must admit that I've bought Sebadoh's *Bakesale*, Fairport Convention's *What We Did On Our Holidays* and Frank Zappa's *Cheap Thrills* on covers – the last one was a bit of a boo-boo but hey, what an amazing drawing! Coming from a small town pre-internet, covers are everything! I feel you can only do a good service if you love the band's music you're commissioned for and so far, I've always been one step too late after the bandwagon or not in the right country at the right time. I wouldn't say music is an influence on my work, but music influences me to draw. I've not concentrated on music commissions, as I'm not as passionate about new music as I am about pre-90s stuff.

TAF: Ok. Let's talk pre-90s then: if there was anyone in the history of music you could work with, who do you think yr style would be best suited to...?

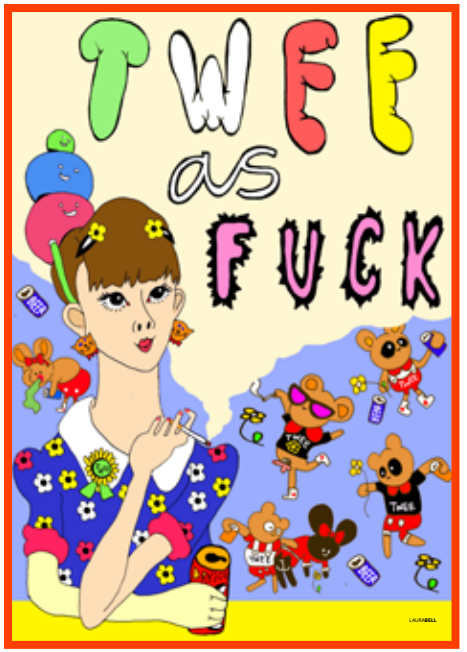
LB: I would love to have worked with Gram Parsons and the Burrito Brothers as I really admire their mix of music and cultures. I travelled in Joshua Tree recently and was blown away by the juxtaposition of the music and the landscape. I also really dig the 'nudie' suits Gram wore and the imagery embroidered on his clothes. Chris Hilman and the guys wore amazing dinosaur jumpers in the desert on one of the album sleeves and that image has just stuck with me.

TAF: We were really chuffed when you agreed to do illustration for Twee – it's like your work was the perfect fit with what we wanted to do with the club night. Why do you think that was?

LB: Twee emerged out of a real lifestyle. We both bonded over mixtapes but we also have

'Ted Kutt' comic 2009

The first Twee as Fuck poster Sep 2007



Original "Twee Girl" artwork Nov 2007

'Instrument Hero'

these hugely contrasting interests in the work we do. I have always been a huge fan of Jesus and Mary Chain, but I also love regional cooking imagery from the '70s. The club to me was about it being OK to love a particular kind of music but not have to fit into a cliché of that movement.

TAF: As a teenage riot grrrl/grunge girl, has the visual aesthetic of some of that music influenced yr work? I remember a mutual friend dragging out one of yr early art school projects when I was last round yr house and you seemed to be really into US, grrrl-led fanzine culture...

LB: I strongly believe the best music, art and design has been created through someone having to improvise and use their imagination. Through most of my influences, you can see a fight to make the best with what you've got. *Cheap Date* fanzine in the late 90s was such an inspiration after spending my teens listening to American grunge bands such as Dinosaur Jr and Riot grrl bands like L7 and Bikini Kill. I had a picture of [Cheap Date founder] Iris Palmer pinned over my studio desk at art school; she was pretty but strange looking, with a don't-give-a-fuck attitude and continued my teen love affair with charity shopping and the DIY ethos. My fanzine was called *Judy* and had a picture of Julie Andrew's head cut on a white trash girl near a burnt-out car! I still have it pinned on my studio board, its tagline read, 'Mike Reid His Pants', which still makes me giggle. 1999 was a great time to be at art college and meant being influenced by people like Harmony Korine, The Moldy Peaches and Bernhard Willhelm. My best friend Alex Mein and I were the black sheep of the digital art kids: we loved marker pens and sketch books, which was frowned upon, but we just stuck with it.

TAF: You have the most amazing stuff in yr flat that really reminds me of yr work: bold outlines; strong round shapes; lots of bright colours...

LB: I just love collecting stuff. [My boyfriend] Pen and I are magpies, but we don't collect shiny things – we collect stuff. I see our flat, wherever it moves, as our shop. I am very envious of the Fluxus and Arts and Crafts peeps who collaborated and created things that embodied their ethos. I'm just lazy and don't have time to make my stuff, so I collect instead. When I was in LA last November the whole music and art scene there really inspired me: you could really see how the music came out of the different environments around Lauren Canyon and Venice Beach; it really inspired me how important your surroundings are to your work. My most prized possession is a piece of homemade pottery I found years ago in a charity shop near Canning Town. It's a weird skinny mythical creature man with a clown nose and bread bun hat sat on a rock, playing a pipe, sat near some beautifully painted cabbages. It sounds mad but in real life makes so much sense.

TAF: Are there any other illustrators who have really influenced the 'look' of yr work?

LB: I'm not conscious of anyone, or thing, influencing the look of my work as I have always drawn in the same style (I can't draw any other way), but I'm a big fan of Bernhard Wilhelm, Claus Oldenburg, Robert Crumb, Chester Brown, Walter Van Beirendonck, Quentin Blake, Richard Scarry and Leo Baxendale, John Currin, Andrew Murray, the drawings from the Shaker town plans and a lot of the early punk posters. However, I would say the biggest influence on my work is food: I am really into cooking and loved collecting '70s cookbooks as a kid (usually the only ones available at car boot sales and charity shops). The images of food were mind-blowing: sandwiches made into architectural towers with glacé cherry windows, and cakes decorated with angelica, green jelly and chocolate flakes to look like a bog with frogs and lily pads! This is probably why Bernhard Willhelm's graduate collection blew me away: it was the combination of art, design and food I was looking for. Arts and Crafts for the working classes, where your sandwich could be your lunch *and* your hat for going to the local Spar!

TAF: You've done fashion commissions as both a print designer and illustrator: do you find yrself working in a different way when doing this kind of work as opposed to editorial?

LB: No, I approach everything the same way. This is the main reason why I'm not commercially successful.

TAF: Which aspect of yr work are you most proud of? Is there anything you'd like to try?

LB: Drawing is not academic and is as normal to me as eating toast so I think it's hard to be proud of something you see as everyday and fun.

TAF: Are you working on anything on the moment: where can we go to see more Laura Bell?

LB: I have small things in the pipeline, mainly editorial projects overseas. My big project at the moment is a children's book: it'll take time to emerge, but I think it will be my most satisfying project yet.

TAF: Amazing. And of course we're very excited you're doing the artwork for the new Bobby McGee's single...

LB: It was a true pleasure to be asked - I was a true obsessive of 'No Friends' a few years back - loved the combination of the innocent words and the strong Scottish accent, so I was a massive fan without knowing anything about them. I think it's really special when you become obsessed with a song before being 'introduced' to the band visually or by reading about them - which is very rare these days. And even more amazing when you find them just as fun to look at as they are to listen to! I first heard

The Bobby McGee's L.O.V.E. 7" cover 2009

the Bobbies from a mixtape my boyfriend made me yonks ago, which then got passed onto my own mixtape runs for groups of friends so we all became obsessed without knowing much about them! It's that nostalgia from being a teenager when you'd discover bands from homemade mixtapes and enjoy the next steps of researching them and seeking them out. It was then great to meet the Bobbies when Pen and I did a dj set at Twee as Fuck last year, and have loads of giggles over Chug-a-Lug and the records we'd brought along. Some of the best art and music has come out of bedrooms and I think 'bedroom movements' are taking serious notes from Gilbert and George - grab your 'bedroom partner' and creating your own movement from home!

TAF: You always seem to be discovering new stuff so I have to ask: what's exciting Laura Bell right now?

LB: God Elaine, are you ready?! I'm really digging Booth's supermarket –their packaging is amazing; Poggles' Wood; Frank Newfeld – friend from Canada sent me this book *Alligator Pie* and it's AMAZING! Honfest; PerryBible Fellowship; Mingering Mike; Ripailles French cook book; GoodHood shopping in London; HolidayPad.net, and I've been reliving my youth with 'My So Called Life', 'Freaks and Geeks' and 'Kids from Degrassi Street' with my duvet on a lazy Sunday.

www.myspace.com/laurabellbell

Label of Love

No. 1 : Slumberland Records

Words: Pavla Kopecna & Rory Mackie

Slumberland began life in 1989 when a group of DC musicians set up the company to release their own music. The label quickly garnered a worldwide reputation among popkids and noise heads alike. Head honcho Mike Schulman talks us through it all...

TAF: The label was set up by various members of Velocity Girl and Big Jesus Trash Can right? How did that happen?

I guess it all sort of began with Big Jesus Trash Can, which was started by me and my friend Rob in 1986. Neither of us had really played instruments before, but we were really into The Jesus & Mary Chain, lower east side noise (Sonic Youth, Swans), Birthday Party, Big Black, etc. In time Dan and Brian joined in and we started playing some shows and trying to build up a little scene. Some of our other friends started a group called The Gotterdammacrats, who went on to become Velocity Girl. Some of them and some of Big Jesus guys started Black Tambourine, and then Kelly from VG and I started Powderburns. So we had the growing bunch of bands, all of whom were playing shows and/or tinkering on a 4-track, and at some point we thought it would be a good idea to document what we were doing. 7" singles were booming back then, and since I worked in a record store and had contact with distributors, it made sense to give it a shot. Our first single was released in December 1989 -- a 3 band compilation taken from cassettes. We didn't have any concept of the long haul or whether we'd be able to even sell what we'd made, but Big Jesus and Velocity Girl for sure had plans to record more and make their own singles. As it happened Powderburns beat them to the punch, but that's another story!

TAF: Where did the name Slumberland come from, and what does it stand for?

The name was cribbed from an amazing, surreal sunday comic called *Little Nemo in Slumberland,* by Winsor McKay. It combined gorgeous full-color art with surreal stories and must have been quite mind-blowing back in the early 1990s! Definitely blew our minds. I think that the combination of lovely art and wild ideas in some way embodied what we were shooting for. Our aesthetic then and now is basically to put out records with great songs, great sounds and interesting noise -- in any combination. Pretty vague, I know, but there you have it.

TAF: You mentioned that you owe a lot to Cynthia Connely at DC Space – the one club in Washington DC that consistently booked your bands. Can you tell us more?

I don't think it's much of an exaggeration to say that without Cynthia's support we probably wouldn't have stuck with it for very long. There was not a lot of weird post-punk noise stuff going on in DC at the time and we didn't have a lot of connections with other bands or labels. Cynthia was always getting behind weirdos and misfits, and for some reason kept booking the bands. Since then I don't think we've had quite as close a relationship with bookers. Over the years we've managed to build up enough of a reputation so that there are clubs in a few specific places (DC, SF, NYC, London) where we can generally get shows going, but outside of that it's tough going.

TAF: Other than yourselves, K, and Bus Stop, there really weren't a lot of "pop" labels in the US at the time you began - how difficult was it establishing yourself whilst everyone was going ga-ga over Grunge? Was there a geographic factor?

It was not an easy path to take, especially when we kind of shifted gears from the noisier stuff to the poppier stuff. It was always our intention to put out *both* sides of the music, but it took a while to get the pop records going. It seemed like a natural area to work in, because we all loved pop - from 60s stuff to Postcard to Creation to C86 to Flying Nun. You are correct in pointing out that there weren't many pop labels in the US at the time, which gave us additional purpose to try and fill that gap. While pop seems to be more universally popular now, I do think that there's still a geographic component to it in that the US is still not overly pop-friendly. There's lots of kids into the music and more labels willing to release it, but in some ways pop needs to masquerade as more general "indie" music here to be accepted, and even then it's still something of a sideline to the real indie stuff.

TAF: You've decided to move to the Bay area in California What's it like out there in terms of the music you work with? We particularly like Dum Dum Girls...

For better or worse, since I left DC I don't feel like our location has played a big part in the label and who we work with. Since 1991 or so we've worked with a pretty even balance of east coast, west coast and UK bands. For a while the SF scene was really booming with Henry's Dress, The Aislers Set, The Fairways, #Poundsign#, The Frenchmen. But even then it was only the Dress and Aislers that we worked directly with. Now that I'm an old man I hardly ever go out anymore, so I am kind of out of it with local bands. I like Brilliant Colors a lot, and like what I've heard from Girls. And I agree, Dum Dum Girls rule!

TAF: Our favourite Slumberland release is probably 'My Forgotten Favourite' by Velocity Girl. What's yours?

Probably a toss-up: the first HoneyBunch single we did cause it was our first venture outside our DC scene, the Jane Pow single cause it was our first UK band, and Lilys' 'February Fourteenth' because it sounded so much like a "real" record, if you know what I mean.

TAF: Slumberland was on hiatus for a time, but you've come storming back with releases from Cause Co-Motion, Crystal Stilts, Pains Of Being Pure At Heart etc.. how gratifying is it to realise how highly regarded Slumberland are now?

It's incredibly gratifying and flattering. When we started we didn't have an idea of doing much more than three or four singles, and most of us had never really made music before. To have lasted for twenty years still be putting out what I consider to be some of our best releases yet, and to have some of them be bands who were influenced by what we did in the early days - well, that's pretty amazing!

TAF: The resurgence of Slumberland Records certainly seems to coincide with a resurgence of fantastic indiepop lo-fi bands such as The Pains of Being Pure At Heart and Crystal Stilts . Why is that?

It's a good question - I have no idea! I guess it's just the general cycle of renewal and revival finally catching up with the kind of music we liked in the 90s.

TAF: How different is it running a label now to in the 1990s? Has new technology changed things for the better or worse?

The most obvious difference of course is that a lot of people stopped buying music and have found other ways of filling their iPods. It's a bummer in a lot of ways, but that train has long since left the station and we all just have to deal with it. I think a growing number of people do realize that it's important to support the bands by buying their records and also understand that indie labels have an important part to play as curators, filters and facilitators. So I feel like we're starting now to finally see downloads and blogs starting to work as advertised - giving the fans better information and ways to hear new music, and giving bands and labels tools to reach an increasingly fragmented market. It does seem like you have to work quite a bit harder nowadays to just get the records out

there, but so it goes. Things always change.

TAF: What advice would you give to anyone setting up a DIY label?

My advice has stayed the same over the years: don't put out records you don't truly believe in, don't spend money you can't afford to lose, try to find your own niche or sweet spot and stick to it.

TAF: I think our readers would be intrigued about how you work (we know we are!). Is there a typical working day?

I've always had full time jobs in addition to SLR, so the typical day involved getting up well before dawn to answer emails and mail, spend the day at my "real" job, then come home and head back up to the office to get more work done. Weekends are often spent filling mail orders and catching up on other work. It's all gotten quite a bit tougher lately with the almost-simultaneous arrival of my lovely son Theo and the modest increase in interest in the label, which means more work to do in less time. I run the label myself, so in addition to working with the bands, distributors and pressing plants, I also do all the art and oversee the promotion and marketing, such as it is. It's all fun its own way though sometimes the sheer volume of work can make any of the tasks seem tedious. I'm a terrible designer, so anytime I come up with an advert or other piece of art that's not totally shitty I feel pretty good.

TAF: The Slumberland back catalogue is impeccable: Velocity Girl, Black Tambourine, Henry's Dress... What was it like working with such amazing bands?

A lot of the time it was just me/us working with friends, so the amazingness of it all wasn't always as obvious. Some real high points: getting to work with Stereolab; having Kurt from The Lilys (who we all knew as the kid that worked at Tower Records) hand me a demo and have it be INCREDIBLE; driving to NYC to play a Whorl gig at CBGB's with Drunk Tank and Dustdevils; coming home from work one day and having the DustDevils making an unholy racket in my basement; sharing the stage with The Wedding Present in DC (and using Grapper's amp!); finally listening to the Henry's Dress demo after Amy must have called me 20 times and realizing what a fool I was to not listen sooner; jumping around arm-in-arm with hundreds of Japanese kids in Tokyo singing along with all the Aislers Sets songs before the record was even out; watching The Lodger play in NYC with Pants Yell! and The Pains in fall 2007 and realizing that something was really happening again. And so many more over the years, it's really hard to remember them all!

TAF: What other gems can we expect from Slumberland in the near future? Any plans for the 20th anniversary?

A few of the upcoming SLR treats are: new Cause Co-Motion! 12" EP, Bricolage LP/CD, Liechtenstein 10"/CD that we're co-releasing with Fraction, Summer Cats LP/CD, Brown Recluse Sings LP/CD, plus the return of the Searching For The Now split single series. All exciting stuff! There's some talk of a handful of 20th anniversary shows in a few cities, hopefully featuring a combination of SLR bands old and new. More info soon!

TAF: I see a couple of 'best of 2008' lists on the Slumberland website - but no sign of yours yet? What have you been listening to recently?

I did finally post my list: http://perfect.slumberlandrecords.com/?p=144
Recent favorites include: Let's Wrestle album, Dum Dum Girls 12", Mayfair Set 7", Fresh & Onlys 7". I'm so behind on listening to records - with the baby now it's hard to find time to sit down and listen to new stuff.

TAF: Any plans to re-instate the 'I Wish I Was A Slumberland Record' imprint?

Ha ha, I'm too busy as it is! In some ways everything is mail order only nowadays...

TAF: What would be your dream release?

We've had loads of near-miss records over the years that *almost* happened. One that jumps to mind was a single by Dead Famous People, but it didn't quite work out. Ah well...

Album Review

Camera obscura

My Maudlin Career

The first Camera Obscura album for 4AD (and isn't that a perfect fit?) is an absolute gem. Picking up where 'Let's Get Out Of This Country' left off, the record contains no major surprises or strained musical "progression", but rather everything you could possibly want from a Camera Obscura LP. It's a gauzy wash of sixties - inspired sunshine, gorgeous melancholia and the sound of a great band at the top of their game creating perfect pop songs seemingly at will. Not to say that this is just a facsimile of the previous record. Though the LPs share the same sonic palette, 'My Maudlin Career' is lyrically darker than its predecessor. If previously the band posed the question "are you ready to be heartbroken" then this album replies "yes, and you know what? It's rather wonderful."

Working again with producer Jari Haapalainen (The Concretes) the band have created a sound that pays hommage to clasic girl groups, Phil Spector, Motown, Northern Soul and on occasion, the bucolic folk of Vashti Bunyan, while still sounding undeniably like Camera Obscura. Kicking off with the wonderful first line "Spent a week in a dusty library" the record veers from upbeat pop songs to beautiful, introspective ballads. It creates its own world evocative of a feeling you can't quite put your finger on; nostalgic for a time you can no longer remember clearly. The perfect soundtrack to a hazy summer lost to dreams and heartache.

Words by Rory Mackie

Three x Five

Five songs we'd buy a broken record player for...

Jude Georges:

Velocity Girl: Pop Loser
Betty and The Werewolves: David Cassidy
The Bats: Castle Lights
beacons: (Darling) I Bet You've Seen
Moofish Catfish: Ten Days In My Room

Elaine:

The Carrots: Kissing and Telling
The Dentists: I Can See Your House From Up Here
Comet Gain: Beatnik
The Go-Betweens: Lee Remick
Peter Parker: Temper Temper

Pavla:

The Aislers Set: Emotional Levy
The Bobby McGee's: Harold & Maude
Camera Obscura: French Navy
Dum Dum Girls: Jail La La
Comet Gain: You Can Hide Your Love Forever

Seven Sevens

Seven 7"s we can't get enough of...

Crystal Stilts: Love Is A Wave (Slumberland 7")
Although this 'new' single is left over from the Alight Of Night sessions, it sounds like a response to the recent glut of reviews accusing Crystal Stilts of 'miserabilism'. An upbeat, organ-led burst of buzzsaw-pop, it's not quite the sonic equivalent of the band swapping skinny black jeans for Hawaiian shorts, but may be their 'Friday I'm In Love' moment nonetheless. Rory Mackie

Peter Parker: Swallow the Rockets (Say Dirty/Lucky Number Nine 7")
The first single from Glasgow's Peter Parker is a slice of prime post punk-pop, matching an insistently primitive drum sound with melodic bass-line and sassy vocal. We've liked this live for a long time, so it's about time we can take it home on record. Elaine Tierney

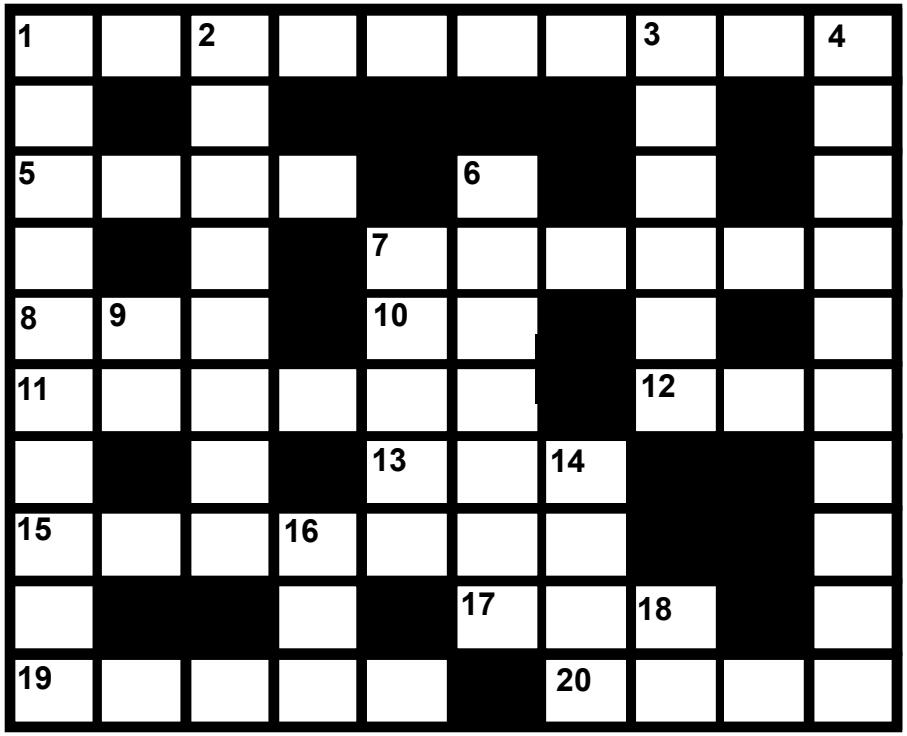
The Sexual Objects: Bluetime in Fluff '82 (Aufgeladen und Bereit 7")
Idiots will claim the vocals to Bluetime in Fluff '82 bear a similarity to Mick Jagger, but when did Britain's most shameless shagger write anything nearly as remarkable as 'Let's disappear Into the badly glued-down stratosphere, get out of here the atmosphere in here I fear is phosphorus all over us'? Mr Henderson, what kind of cheese are you eating at night? ET

Je suis animal: The Mystery of Marie Roget (Angular 7")
Flute intros, cases of mistaken identity, alarm bell noises and male barbershop-style backing vocals aren't things you think of when you think of Je suis animal, are they? But, being Je suis animal indeed, this makes for a wonderfully charming and graceful song that earns these lovely Norwegians all the respect they deserve. Pavla Kopecna

Betty and The Werewolves: David Cassidy (Damaged Goods 7")
The Betties swap their usual garage grrrl punka rama-lama for a more c86-sounding three minutes of Flatmates/Shop Assistants pop fuzz. About the most fun it's possible to have whilst jumping up and down and grinning like an idiot. RM

The Pains of Being Pure At Heart: Young Adult Friction (Slumberland/ Fortuna Pop 7")
What's not to like? Everyone's favourite cute-as-a-button, cool-as-cucumber pop stars release another corker of a single, this time telling the cheeky tale of young love in a library. Dizzy 80s keyboards, charmingly low-key vocals and downright incredible drums that make you want to go back to school, pronto. PK

Dum-Dum Girls: Yours Alone (Captured Tracks 12")
More blissed out echo chamber-pop a la Vivian Girls and Liechtenstein, courtesy of Californians Dum-Dum Girls. A brilliant mix of Shop Asisstants fuzz and early Primitives songcraft (think 'Through The Flowers' particularly). And, yes, we know it's not a seven-inch, but trust us, for this band we'd cheat our own mothers. RM



Pop crossword by Rory Mackie

ACROSS

1. US indiepop band that put out the LP *How I Learned To Write Backwards.* (7,3)
5. See 1 Down.
7. Stephen MacRobbie is sometmes referred to as Stephen ..... due to this leadership of a legendary Glasgow indiepop band. (6)
8. A Certain Ratio are also referred to as this. (1,1,1)
10. (and 15 across) Babes .. .. - Riot Grrl band formed by Kat Bjelland in 1987 (2,7)
11. Noisy US indie band signed to the What's Your Rupture? record label. (6)
12. British electronica group, founded in 1986 by Fred Browning and Patrick Nicholson. (1,1,1)
13. ... McCabe, keyboard player for The Dandy Warhols. (3)
15. See 10 across.
17. Band formed in 1990 by ex-Spaceman 3 member Sonic Boom. (1,1,1)
19. '..... Miles High' 1966 single by The Byrds. (5)
20. .... Banana. Japanese noise rock band frormed by Yasuko Onuki in 1991 (4)

DOWN

1. (and 5 across) Band fronted by Stuart Leslie Godard that released debut LP *Dirk Wears White Sox* in 1979 (4,3,3,4)
2. ..... Looks Good To Me. US Indiepop band fronted by Fred Thomas (8)
3. 1987 LP by Sonic Youth. (6)
4. US Indiepop band that released LP *Old Traditions, New Standards* in 1996 *(10)*
6. A DIY magazine (often covering a musical 'scene') such as Matt Haynes' *Are You Scared To Get Happy* (7)
7. "Don't Take The .....'. Song by The Fall included on the 2007 reissue of *Shift Work* (5)
9. Misery Loves .. Swedish industrial metal duo of the 1990s and early 2000s (2)
14. .... Green. US singer-songwriter and ex-member of the Moldy Peaches. (4)
16. *Ooh Lah* ... 1973 LP by The Faces (3).
18. *Eminem Presents The ..-Up.* Remix LP by Eminem (2)

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BRICOLAGE

"BRICOLAGE" LP/CD
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LIECHTENSTEIN

"Survival Strategies In A Modern World" 10"/CD

CRYSTAL STILTS

"ALIGHT OF NIGHT" LP/CD
"LOVE IS A WAVE" 7"

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Bonne Idee

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